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REMARKS

Claims 2 and 5-14 remain pending herein. Claim 3 is cancelled hereby.

Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112. Claim 6 is amended as set forth above to make it clear that the last six words in the claim read "in front of the steerable wheel" (rather than "in steerable of the front wheel" as apparently understood by the U.S. PTO). Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are requested.

Claims 14, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 4,750,578 (Brandenfels '578). Claims 7, 9 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Brandenfels '578.

The present invention is directed to providing a self-propelled vehicle that can be utilized in such a way that an operator can ride thereon or cargo can be placed thereon, and the vehicle is suitable to use to convey an aged or a handicapped person who is being cared for by a provider.

On the contrary, Brandenfels '578 is directed to a dismantlable and collapsible utility cart that can be carried and stored. Accordingly, the object of Brandenfels '578 is different from the object of the present invention. As detailed below, as a result of the differing objects, the respective structures of Brandenfels '578 and the present invention differ in important ways. According to the above-mentioned object of the present invention, the vehicle of the present invention is, for the purpose of caring for an aged and/or handicapped person, able to be used in a state where an aged or handicapped person is riding thereon when the vehicle is run forward, and to be used to convey a person being cared for (e.g., an aged or handicapped person) while sitting on a seat of the vehicle either facing or not facing the operator when the vehicle is run backward.

The present invention is particularly useful in that it is capable of safely carrying a person under care because an operator who is operating the vehicle can convey the person under care while checking on the condition of the person while the operator runs the vehicle backward while facing the person under care.

Therefore, from this point of view, the vehicle of the present invention must be able to be selectively driven forward or backward, and also must be able to be driven backward in a state where the operator is not riding thereon, so that the handlebar of the vehicle must be arranged, for a backward run, in front of the steerable wheel.

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On the other hand, the cart in Brandenfels '578 is not considered to be a structure for a backward run such as the above-mentioned structure of the present invention, because of the different use for the cart according to Brandenfels '578.

Accordingly, Brandenfels '578 differs importantly from the present invention, and cannot provide the above-mentioned effects of the present invention.

Comparison of Claim 14 with Brandenfels '578

In Brandenfels '578, there is disclosure that the cart can also be used as a dolly. However, Brandenfels '578 does not disclose or suggest a driving portion which selectively drives the vehicle forward or backward.

Brandenfels '578 discloses a seat which is removable, but does not disclose or suggest a seat which is swivelable.

Claim 14 is amended as set forth above to recite that the seat is swivelable and removable.

In view of these structural differences, claim 14 is allowable over Brandenfels '578, which neither discloses nor renders obvious the claimed features which are recited in claim 14 and not disclosed in Brandenfels '578.

Comparison of Claim 2 with Brandenfels '578

In Brandenfels '578, there is disclosure that a driving portion and a steering portion are mounted on a front wheel support, and a front wheel support is detachably secured to the forward end of the chassis member (Brandenfels '578, column 2, lines 2-4 and 11-12).

In the present invention, the claimed front wheel portion having a driving portion can be attached to another conveying means (specification, page 7, lines 8-12). Brandenfels '578 does not contain any such disclosure.

Claim 2 is amended as set forth above to incorporate claim 3 and to distinguish Brandenfels '578 on this basis. Accordingly, claim 2 is allowable over Brandenfels '578 for these additional reasons.

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Comparison of Claim 6 with Brandenfels '578

In Brandenfels '578, there is disclosure that a steering handle can be swung rearwardly for the cart being stored and pivoted forwardly for the cart being used as a dolly (Brandenfels '578, abstract, lines 5-8 and column 1, lines 54-58).

A handlebar of the present invention is arranged for the forward run on the backside of the front wheel because the operator riding on the vehicle can easily hold it to operate the vehicle. However, the handlebar of Brandenfels '578 is in an upright position when the operator riding on the cart operates the cart, and it is swung rearwardly only when the cart is collapsed for storage.

Accordingly, claim 6 is further distinguished from Brandenfels '578 in view of the recitation in claim 6 that the handlebar is arranged to be able to be held to operate the vehicle by an operator for a forward run on a backside of the steerable wheel and a backward run in front of the steerable wheel.

Comparison of Claim 7 with Brandenfels '578

The vehicle of claim 7 of the present application includes armrests to be able to be used to safely convey an aged or handicapped person (specification, page 11, lines 4-5) for the above-mentioned object of the present invention. However, the object of Brandenfels '578, which does not disclose or suggest such armrests, is different from the object of the present invention, as described above. Accordingly, Brandenfels '578 fails to contain disclosure which would suggest the addition of armrests. In addition, claim 7 is allowable over Brandenfels '578 in view of its dependency from claim 14 which, as discussed above, is allowable over Brandenfels '578.

Comparison of Claim 8 with Brandenfels '578

In claim 8 of the present application, a seat of the vehicle is turnable so that the conveyed person can be conveyed in a position facing a desired direction, and the seat can be oriented in the direction to simplify that person getting on and getting off of the vehicle (specification, page 11, lines 13-19). Brandenfels '578, however, does not disclose a seat which is swivelable, and merely discloses that the seat is removable. In addition, Brandenfels '578 fails to contain disclosure which would provide any motivation to modify the seat of Brandenfels '578 so as to be swivelable. Accordingly, claim 8 is allowable over Brandenfels '578.

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Comparison of Claim 9 with Brandenfels '578

As mentioned above, the object of Brandenfels '578 is to provide a cart that can be easily carried and stored. The addition of a part such as a supporting bar, as recited in claim 9, would be contradictory to the object of Brandenfels '578. Accordingly, Brandenfels '578 would not render obvious the subject matter of claim 9. In addition, claim 9 is allowable due to its dependency from claim 14 which, as discussed above, is allowable over Brandenfels '578.

Comparison of Claim 10 with Brandenfels '578

In Brandenfels '578, there is disclosure that the cart can be used as a dolly (Brandenfels '578, abstract, line 21). Brandenfels '578 fails to contain any disclosure of a cart which is self-propelled at a speed which is substantially equal to human walking speed. Accordingly, claim 10 is allowable over Brandenfels '578.

Comparison of Claim 13 with Brandenfels '578

As mentioned above, the object of Brandenfels '578 is to provide a cart that can be easily carried and stored. Brandenfels '578 fails to disclose a steering wheel. The modification of Brandenfels '578 to include a steering wheel would be contradictory to the object of Brandenfels '578, because a steering wheel is less easily carried and stored than a handlebar. Accordingly, Brandenfels '578 fails to render obvious a steering wheel. Moreover, claim 13 is allowable over Brandenfels '578 in view of its dependency from claim 14, which is also allowable over Brandenfels '578.

Comparison of claims 5, 11 and 12 with Brandenfels '578

Claims 5, 11 and 12 are all allowable due to their dependency from claim 14 which, as discussed above, is allowable over Brandenfels '578.

In view of the above, the subject matter of each of claims 2 and 5-14 is neither anticipated by nor rendered obvious by Brandenfels '578. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of these rejections are requested.

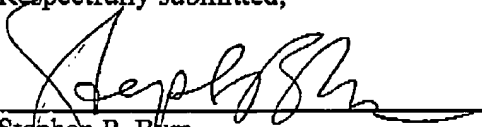
In view of the above, claims 2 and 5-14 are allowable.

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If the Examiner believes that contact with Applicant's attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, the Examiner is herein requested to call Applicant's attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

2. (Four Times Amended) The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in Claim 14, further comprising:

a front wheel portion and a truck portion, wherein
the front wheel portion has the driving portion and the steering portion
disposed at a front wheel portion, and in that the front wheel portion is disposed at a front
end portion of the truck portion,
the front wheel portion is detachably secured to the forward end of the truck
portion.
the front wheel portion which is detached from the truck portion can be attached
to another conveying means.

6. (Twice Amended) The self-propelled vehicle as set forth in Claim 5, wherein the steering handle comprises:

handle stems arranged at an upper end of a front wheel suspending portion, said
the handle stems fixed to the front wheel suspending portion, said
the handle stems adapted to be turned to rise and fall longitudinally; and
a handle bar fixed to the handle stems generally at a right angle with respect to the
handle stems, said
the handle bar handle arranged to be able to be held to operate the vehicle by an
operator which operates the vehicle for a forward run on a back side of the steerable
wheel and for a backward run in steerable front of the front steerable wheel.

14. (Amended) A self-propelled vehicle comprising:

- a driving portion which can be selectively drives the vehicle switched between a
forward or driving mode and a backward driving mode.
the driving portion driving the vehicle forward when the driving portion is in the
forward driving mode and driving the vehicle backward when the driving portion is in the
backward driving mode.

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

_____ a seat which is swivelable or removable, a steering portion which comprises at least one steerable wheel and at least one steering handle,
_____ the steering handle being rotatable from one side of a hinge point to an opposite side of the hinge point,
_____ whereby the vehicle can be operated forward or backward by an operator riding on the vehicle and the vehicle can be run backward with an operator not riding on the vehicle.